

Reviews.

APPLIED ANATOMY OF THE NERVOUS SYSTEM, by A. L. Ranney, A.M., M.D. 2d Ed. D. Appleton & Co. 1888.

Dr. Ranney's book on the Anatomy of the Nervous System is well known to most American neurologists, and does not call for extensive notice in this journal. The criticisms passed upon the first edition were so decided in their tone that we naturally looked for many changes in this second edition, which the author has "re-written, enlarged and profusely illustrated." That it is rewritten and enlarged is very evident; that it is profusely illustrated falls a little short of the truth. The illustrations are so numerous that the printed matter appears to be a mere accompaniment to the text, and we are bound to add that the illustrations are not always happily chosen. They are culled from all possible sources, and many of them from works that are decidedly antiquated. The author claims "originality of treatment * * *, because diagrammatic illustration forms an important feature in the author's system of teaching." Ingenious diagrams are, to be sure, a great aid in teaching, but it is not sufficient merely to alter diagrams of other authors, it is of greater importance still to present the subject in a novel, or at least an interesting fashion. This, Dr. Ranney has not done; he presents an immense number of theories and controversial facts on every point that is at all in doubt, and never ventures to express a decisive opinion. The book shows too plainly that the author's own researches and studies do not entitle him to speak with any sort of authority on any subject treated in this book. The author's reading too, seems to be of a peculiar sort; "home products" seem to make a deep impression upon his mind, altogether out of proportion to their true worth, entire pages are quoted from "home" articles, the conclusions are taken up in the main body of the work, and then a little foot-note is added to say that there may still be some doubt on this or that point. This is supposed to be a text-book from which the student is to gather accurate information, and Dr. Ranney should have resisted the temptation of placing all this recondite lore before the student who would rise from a perusal of these pages with the idea that almost anything and everything can be maintained with regard to cerebral anatomy, provided you can produce a few neat looking diagrams to prove the case.

We have spoken in general terms, but it would be impossible to criticise in detail. The author's judgment is sufficiently characterized by the fact that he reproduces Luys' absurd theories regarding the thalamus which every one else has abandoned; his account of the lemniscus is a mixture of the views of Flechsig, Meynert, Spitzka and others, and we challenge any student to form any sort of idea of what the lemniscus is and what it is not. In reporting Goltz's views the author refers to a method of experimentation which Goltz abandoned fully six years ago. Ecker's well-known diagram of the convolutions is said to be after Ferrier; Flechsig's diagrams are taken at second and third hand, and after they have passed through this process are slightly altered by the author.

Such criticisms would be unjust, if the author did not point to the illustrations as *the* important feature of his book.

If the author wishes to see in what way diagrams can be made to subserve a useful purpose, let him consult Edinger's little book—a book, by the way, which he might have consulted with great advantage to himself. If the public calls for a third edition of the "Applied Anatomy," we hope the author will start afresh, that he will avoid all controversial facts, and will give the student a more concise account of the anatomy of the central nervous system, and fewer "pictures."

Letters to the Editor.

To the Editor of THE JOUR. OF NERVOUS AND MENTAL DISEASE.

Sir:—The admirable abstract of Marchi's paper in your journal for August, 1888, pp. 515-517 contains the terms *optic thalami* six times, and the term *corpora striata* nine times in addition to the title. If I am right in holding that no misconception could possibly arise from the employment of the mononyms *striata* and *thalami*, then one-fiftieth of the entire abstract, representing two whole lines of your valuable page, has been needlessly occupied by really irksome repetitions, involving an appreciable loss of time and energy in writing, printing and reading.

BURT G. WILDER.